

## ABSTRACT

Disclosed herein is the discovery that mammalian stem cells do not express  $\beta_2$ microglobulin ( $\beta_2m$ ). The invention discloses a method of isolating stem cells comprising sorting, from a sample of cells, cells that express  $\beta_2m$  from cells that do not express  $\beta_2m$ . One then selects stem cells from the population of cells that does not express  $\beta_2m$ . This is accomplished by selecting cells that express a known marker, such as proteins expressed by genes encoding the major histocompatibility complex. An isolated stem cell is disclosed, as is a method for identifying it and other stem cells.